

EAST Search History

Ref #	Hits	Search Query	DBs	Default Operator	Plurals	Time Stamp
L1	391	705/410.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2007/12/18 09:15
L2	334	1 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 09:15
L3	760	mail adj2 block	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 10:02
L4	545	L3 and (@ad<"20031024" or @pd<"20031024" or @rlad<"20031024" or @prad<"20031024")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 10:02
L5	14	4 and (postage adj meter)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 10:03
L6	2	4 and (franking adj (device or machine or system))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 10:03

EAST Search History

S1	100	("(4962454") or ("4760534") or ("4780828") or ("4780835") or ("4821195") or ("4837701") or ("4853864") or ("4853865") or ("4855920") or ("4888803") or ("4907161") or ("4947333") or ("4998204") or ("4999481") or ("5257196") or ("5628249") or ("5648916") or ("5650934") or ("5684706") or ("5734566") or ("6026385") or ("6510992") or ("6793136") or ("20010032881") or ("20030111524") or ("20040122781") or ("20040125406") or ("20050131719") or ("20050132057") or ("20060196374") or ("5983264") or ("4589555") or ("4778018") or ("4836311") or ("4836312") or ("4836313") or ("4842084") or ("4844188") or ("4848492") or ("4856602") or ("4903788") or ("5368287") or ("5411250") or ("5475603") or ("6966711") or ("20020184324") or ("20040133592") or ("20050135859") or ("20050251493") or ("5774885") or ("4760532") or ("4800505") or ("4908768") or ("4933616") or ("5283752") or ("5329102") or ("5419440") or ("5429249") or ("5471928") or ("5493500") or ("5583779") or ("5606613") or ("5659481") or ("5722221") or ("5729954") or ("5768132") or ("5840123") or ("5960963") or ("5966302") or ("5971161") or ("6131053") or ("6173274") or ("6205373") or ("6311104") or ("6327515") or ("6334119") or ("6623002") or ("6644660") or ("6662079") or ("6715755") or ("6741971") or ("6783290") or ("6816838") or ("6893175") or ("6988842") or ("7040616") or ("7099039") or ("20020133472") or ("20030033053") or ("20030075861") or ("20030083779") or ("20040021755") or ("20040036893") or ("20040064423") or ("20040113356") or ("20040178555") or ("20050069365") or ("20050069367") or ("200600091218") or ("5546577") or	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2007/02/14 13:27
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EAST Search History

S2	1	("4817042").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2007/12/18 09:14
S3	27	S1 not (pitney bowes).as.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 13:34
S4	28	inserter and (postage or postal) and (register same (ascending and descending))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 13:35
S5	25	S4 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 09:15
S6	2	(automatic\$4 with balanc\$3) and inserter and (postal or postage)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 13:50
S7	150	(postage adj meter) same inserter	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 13:50
S8	136	S7 and (mail)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 13:50
S9	123	S7 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:20
S10	14	inserter and (postage adj meter)	EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 14:00
S11	17	("3792446" "3935429" "4138735" "4447890" "4527791" "4535421" "4568072" "4817042" "4908770" "5027279" "5245547" "5384708" "5448490" "5777883" "5873073" "6076081").PN. OR ("6334119"). URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 14:56
S12	215	mail adj block	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 14:56
S13	6	S12 and (postage adj meter)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:19
S14	571	(postage adj meter) and (sort\$3)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:20
S15	111	S14 and (ascending and descending)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:20
S16	104	S15 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 11:10

EAST Search History

S17	2789	((group\$3 or batch\$3 or assign\$3) with (mail or letter or package)) and (postage or postal)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:40
S18	450	S17 and (postage adj meter)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:40
S19	370	S18 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 17:45
S20	332	S19 not S16	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:57
S21	313	S20 not S9	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 15:57
S22	307	S21 not S1	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 16:30
S23	11	mail adj piece adj block	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 16:34
S30	133	(inserter or ((mail or envelope or letter or document) near2 (stuffer))) and (batch or group or (mail near2 block)) and ((frank\$3 or postage) near2 (system or machine or device))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 17:44
S31	106	S30 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/15 09:06
S32	95	S31 not S16	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 17:45
S33	84	S32 not S1	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 17:45
S34	77	S33 not S5	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 17:45
S35	48	S34 not S9	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/14 17:46
S36	72679	((postage or mail or postal or batch\$2 or bulk) near2 (process\$3))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/15 09:03
S37	2630	((postage near2 meter\$3) or (vault) or (frank\$3)) same (mail or letter)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/15 09:05
S38	433	S37 and (ascending and descending)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/15 09:05
S39	279	S36 and S38	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/15 09:05

EAST Search History

S40	245	S39 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 11:05
S56	125	S40 and (batch\$2 or bulk)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/15 11:01
S57	29	((mail adj run) or (batch\$2 near5 mail\$3)) same (mail near5 block)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 11:10
S58	28	S57 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 14:29
S59	29	((mail adj run) or (batch\$2 near5 mail\$3)) same (mail near5 block)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 14:29
S60	28	S59 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 14:29
S61	1	S60 and (gap)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 14:57
S62	10	((mail adj run) or (batch near5 mail\$3) or (bul near5 mail\$3)) same (gap or group\$3 or (mail near2 block))	EPO; JPO; DERWENT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 15:02
S64	1	("6762384").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2007/02/20 15:11
S65	7	("20020069186" "20040122781" "4855920" "5008827" "6365862" "6687569" "6792332").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/02/20 15:11
S66	1	("20040122781").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2007/08/24 14:57
S67	483	705/401.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2007/12/17 14:02
S68	371	S67 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:56
S69	1254	mail near2 block	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:05
S70	229	S69 and (mail near2 piece)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:04
S71	169	S70 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:05
S72	757	mail adj2 block	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:05

EAST Search History

S73	467	S72 and (@ad<"20021025" or @pd<"20021025" or @rlad<"20021025" or @prad<"20021015")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 10:02
S74	13	S73 and (postage adj meter)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/18 10:02
S75	10	(mail adj2 block) and 705/401.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:08
S76	51	(mail near2 block).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:08
S77	569	(form\$3 near5 (mail adj2 piece))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:57
S78	6	S77 and ((compar\$3 or difference) with (register near3 value))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	ADJ	ON	2007/12/17 14:58

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Databases selected: Multiple databases...



Pitney Bowes Introduces the AccuTrac SA Mail Accounting System

Business/Technology Editors. Business Wire. New York: Feb 10, 1998. pg. 1

Abstract (Summary)

The AccuTrac(tm) SA System is part of a family of accounting products offered by Pitney Bowes that allow businesses of every size to better monitor, understand and manage mail expenditures. Postage accounting for small offices is handled by the PostPerfect(tm), and low-to-mid volume applications are well served by the B900 postage meter with its optional accounting features that can track up to 100 accounts. For mid-to-high level applications, the Paragon(R) Mail Processor offers mail accounting options (up to 1500 accounts), and Ascent(tm)/Ascent(tm) SOLO provide excellent accounting capability for most shipping applications. The AccuTrac(tm) SA system completes the family by providing for high volume mailers and shippers who require more information. Whether the need is for larger capacity for accounts, greater account detail, or a more sophisticated accounting such as a large account number or multiple jobs tied to one account, AccuTrac(tm) SA delivers. At the top of the line, the soon-to-be-released AccuTrac(tm) PC Mail Accounting System will have unlimited account tracking, and it will interface with multiple systems in a host based network.

Full Text (738 words)

Copyright Business Wire Feb 10, 1998

STAMFORD, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Feb. 10, 1998--

New Addition to Family of Accounting Products

That Enables Businesses to Better

Manage, Track and Report Mail Center Expenditures

Pitney Bowes Inc.'s (NYSE: PBI) Mailing Systems division, the leader in mailing technology, announced today that it is expanding its line of management systems that help companies dramatically improve their control and reporting of mail center activity. The company introduced the AccuTrac(tm) SA Mail Accounting System, a software-based accounting tool that interfaces with Pitney Bowes' electronic scales and mailing systems, to eliminate error-prone and time-consuming manual processes typically used for tracking postage and carrier expenditures.

The AccuTrac(tm) SA launch comes at a time when companies are placing an increased emphasis on the automation of their mail centers to reduce costs in order to offset the proposed postal rate increase. Targeted for implementation this summer, this rate increase averages 4.5%, so it's not just a penny more. Additionally, the USPS reports steadily growing mail volumes as companies continue to turn to mail as their primary sales and marketing tool. This growth in promotional mail is substantiated by a recent Gallup study that found that direct mail expenditures at 65% of U.S. companies have increased over the last several years.

The AccuTrac(tm) SA System is part of a family of accounting products offered by Pitney Bowes that allow businesses of every size to better monitor, understand and manage mail expenditures. Postage accounting for small offices is handled by the PostPerfect(tm), and low-to-mid volume applications are well served by the B900 postage meter with its optional accounting features that can track up to 100 accounts. For mid-to-high level applications, the Paragon(R) Mail Processor offers mail accounting options (up to 1500 accounts), and Ascent

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"If knowledge is power, the AccuTrac(tm) SA system is a Herculean accounting solution unmatched in the industry," stated Kevin S. Weiss, Vice President Marketing, Pitney Bowes Mailing Systems. "The AccuTrac(tm) System compliments our current suite of accounting products very well, and re-inforces Pitney Bowes commitment to offering accounting solutions to customers of every size. These accounting systems will enable businesses to better manage and analyze critical data," continued Weiss. "This level of automated reporting can lead to more informed business decisions about how to allocate funds and control costs."

The AccuTrac(tm) SA System is full of features that will benefit a wide range of industries where cost control, charge-back processing and security are critical to day-to-day business operations. The system features a greatly expanded account code capability (up to 20,000 accounts with up to 64 alpha-numeric characters), new easy-to-follow screen prompts that result in a very user-friendly system, and the ability to export data via a floppy disk for uploading to spreadsheet programs or other business software. Other features include: --Multiple Carriers --

AccuTrac(tm) accounts for charges by major carriers (USPS, UPS, FedEx, and others) as well as local courier

and delivery services. --Standard and Custom Reports -- Pre-defined reports provide

summary detail on all mailing and/or shipping expenses, and user

defined reports can be customized by date or account number. --Speed Codes -- Simplify frequently used functions to generate

speedy reports and fast mail processing. --Operate As A Profit Center -- AccuTrac(tm) can track expenses

for chargebacks or add surcharges to transactions to cover

processing costs or value added services. --Meter Discrepancy Report -- This report provides an immediate

alert to unauthorized use of postage funds.

All these features are packed in a system that is password protected, Year 2000 compliant and about the size of a notebook to save valuable office space. It's also scaleable; so when office needs grow, the AccuTrac(tm) SA System can be upgraded to function as a data station in a full-fledged, networked AccuTrac(tm) PC Mail Accounting System.

Pitney Bowes is a \$3.9 billion provider of informed mail and messaging management. For more information about the company, please visit our web site at: <http://www.pitney-bowes.com>. SEQN: BW1481

Indexing (document details)

Author(s): Business/Technology Editors

Dateline: CONNECTICUT

Publication title: Business Wire. New York: Feb 10, 1998. pg. 1

Source type: Wire Feed

ProQuest document ID: 26145224

Text Word Count 738

Document URL: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=26145224&sid=4&Fmt=3&clie>

ntId=19649&RQT=309&VName=PQD

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Databases selected: Multiple databases...

The business of mail

Adkins, Tony. *Office Systems*. Mt. Airy: Dec 1993. Vol. 10, Iss. 12; pg. 51, 2 pgs

Abstract (Summary)

Despite the recessionary times, US mail volume has experienced a steady growth in recent years, largely because of increases in areas such as direct mail and end-user billing. Consequently, the mailroom has emerged as an important cost center within a business, and mailing or shipping are now viewed as significant elements of overhead. As a result, today's sophisticated yet cost-effective mail- and shipping-equipment solutions are designed to increase productivity for all levels of users. The most significant change in mailing-equipment technology over the past 5 years is the automatic resetting of postage meters. Another industry-wide movement is the growing popularity of more sophisticated mail accounting systems. In addition, tabletop folder/inserters systems that address every level of customer need are now available. However, although purchasing a mailing or shipping system may sound like a good deal, the costs of add-ons and maintenance may make leasing a more cost-effective solution for many companies.

Full Text (970 words)

Copyright Office Systems Magazine Corporation Dec 1993

More than 550 million pieces of mail pass through the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS's) system every day, 94% of it generated by corporate America. Despite the recessionary times, mail volume has experienced a steady growth nationwide in recent years--largely because of increases in areas such as direct mail and end-user billing. Even with the emergence of different communications technologies--including E-mail and the facsimile machine--there will continue to be an important communication role for mail in the business world.

With steadily increasing mail volume, the mailroom has emerged as an important cost center within businesses, regardless of their size or the industries they serve. Mailing and shipping are now viewed as significant elements of overhead, an issue that's uppermost in the minds of businesspeople today.

New mailing-and shipping-equipment technologies, designed to increase productivity and provide greater cost-effectiveness, have received a warm reception industrywide. Ongoing changes in rates and rate structures, within the USPS, and increased competition among parcel carriers such as UPS, RPS, Federal Express, Airborne and DHL have motivated companies to keep an even closer eye on mailroom management.

With new cost benefits and dramatically improved mailroom technologies, the profile of the mailing-equipment user has changed dramatically over the past decade. It's no longer a select list of companies from the Fortune 500; the list now includes small to midsize businesses, even companies that mail less than 100 pieces a day. Today's sophisticated, yet cost-effective, mailing-and shipping-equipment solutions are designed to increase productivity for all levels of users.

WHAT'S NEW IN MAIL?

A more systems-oriented approach to mailing equipment is now available to the user. People aren't just buying a mailing machine. They're buying, for example, a mailing machine interfaced with a scale that automatically sets the postage value as the mail is weighed. Buyers are also choosing specific cost-saving equipment features. They're selecting postage meters that can handle decimals so they can take advantage of more-economical USPS rates. Another popular feature is a system's ability to "rate shop," to determine the most cost-effective choice from the many possibilities now available.

The most significant change in mailing-equipment technology over the past 5 years is the automatic resetting of postage meters. In the past, customers had to take their meters to the post office and stand in line to add additional postage. Today, thanks to the cooperation of the USPS, telephone meter resetting is the current standard, which saves the customer that costly and time-consuming trip to the post office.

Another industry-wide movement is the growing popularity of more-sophisticated mail accounting systems. Now more than ever, companies want to be in control of their costs. And, for many businesses, a quick and efficient method to charge back mailing costs to their customers is essential. Mail accounting systems provide consolidated reports outlining the customer's mailing and shipping transactions.

FOLDER/INSERTERS: OUTSOURCING VS. IN-HOUSE

Document handling is a huge growth area. Tabletop folder/insert systems that address every level of customer need are now available. There's an increasing number of companies that regularly send out mailings of 200, 300 or 500 pieces, quantities that are insignificant to a direct-mail house. Yet such mailings are cumbersome and costly to process manually in-house. These companies represent the largest growth area in the folder/ inserter user market.

If a company processes more than 100 documents a day, it would probably benefit by--and save money with--the use of a folder/insert. Especially with billing, companies can save money and increase productivity by bringing the function in-house.

Customers have also moved toward a systems approach. Businesses don't want a machine that just folds and inserts. They want an intelligent system. One that cross-folds and handles different types and sizes of paper. One that can fold and insert documents, and seal the envelope in one pass. One that can interface with a mailing machine. And one that's modular--allowing flexibility to accommodate the company's changing documenthandling requirements.

LEASE VS. PURCHASE: WHICH MAKES MORE SENSE?

Purchasing a mailing or shipping system may sound like a good deal up front. You shop around and find you can save a few hundred here and there. The fact is, a company can negotiate a purchase price without realizing that the initial purchase is only about 40% of the total cost. The company will also be charged for maintenance, parts, add-ons, system upgrades or other features and services, none of which are fixed costs.

What can companies do about it? For many, leasing-price protection is a solution. Leasing not only locks in a price for a period of time, such as 5 years, but you can also bundle in the cost of maintenance, parts, system upgrades, etc.--all within one equipment and maintenance agreement. At the very least, you'll know down to the penny what the costs will be.

WHAT'S TO COME

We don't see any dramatic technological breakthroughs in the next several years. Rather, we're at an evolutionary stage within the industry. Equipment manufacturers are incorporating new technologies into equipment features designed to address the changing needs of their customers.

Since Marvin Runyon has taken over leadership of the USPS, emphasis has been placed on customer service. The postal service is working on incorporating simpler rate structures to allow customers to take greater advantage of discounts. For postal discounts to be motivational, they've got to be understood.

As a mailing-and/or shipping-equipment user, or a potential user, first a company should prepare for future mailing and shipping requirements and keep an open mind about vendors. There are many opportunities to lower costs and be more efficient. Subscribe to industry magazines and attend trade shows. There's no doubt that you'll find a wealth of ideas, and your investment in time will be well spent, with tangible benefits in the form of better control over mailing and shipping costs.

Tony Adkins is vice-president of marketing at Friden Neopost in Haywood, Calif.

Indexing (document details)

Subjects: Technological change, Postal & delivery services, Mailrooms, Industrywide conditions, Cost control, Automation

Classification Codes 9190, 8350, 5110

Locations: US
Author(s): Adkins, Tony
Publication title: Office Systems. Mt. Airy: Dec 1993. Vol. 10, Iss. 12; pg. 51, 2 pgs
Source type: Periodical
ISSN: 87503441
ProQuest document ID: 1256765
Text Word Count 970
Document URL: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1256765&sid=5&Fmt=3&clientid=19649&RQT=309&VName=PQD>

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Databases selected: Multiple databases...



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Full Text (738 words)

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That Enables Businesses to Better

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(tm)/Ascent(tm) SOLO provide excellent accounting capability for most shipping applications. The AccuTrac(tm) SA system completes the family by providing for high volume mailers and shippers who require more information. Whether the need is for larger capacity for accounts, greater account detail, or a more sophisticated accounting such as a large account number or multiple jobs tied to one account, AccuTrac(tm) SA delivers. At the top of the line, the soon-to-be-released AccuTrac(tm) PC Mail Accounting System will have unlimited account tracking, and it will interface with multiple systems in a host based network.

"If knowledge is power, the AccuTrac(tm) SA system is a Herculean accounting solution unmatched in the industry," stated Kevin S. Weiss, Vice President Marketing, Pitney Bowes Mailing Systems. "The AccuTrac(tm) System compliments our current suite of accounting products very well, and re-inforces Pitney Bowes commitment to offering accounting solutions to customers of every size. These accounting systems will enable businesses to better manage and analyze critical data," continued Weiss. "This level of automated reporting can lead to more informed business decisions about how to allocate funds and control costs."

The AccuTrac(tm) SA System is full of features that will benefit a wide range of industries where cost control, charge-back processing and security are critical to day-to-day business operations. The system features a greatly expanded account code capability (up to 20,000 accounts with up to 64 alpha-numeric characters), new easy-to-follow screen prompts that result in a very user-friendly system, and the ability to export data via a floppy disk for uploading to spreadsheet programs or other business software. Other features include: --Multiple Carriers -- AccuTrac(tm) accounts for charges by major

carriers (USPS, UPS, FedEx, and others) as well as local courier

and delivery services. --Standard and Custom Reports -- Pre-defined reports provide

summary detail on all mailing and/or shipping expenses, and user

defined reports can be customized by date or account number. --Speed Codes -- Simplify frequently used functions to generate

speedy reports and fast mail processing. --Operate As A Profit Center -- AccuTrac(tm) can track expenses

for chargebacks or add surcharges to transactions to cover

processing costs or value added services. --Meter Discrepancy Report -- This report provides an immediate

alert to unauthorized use of postage funds.

All these features are packed in a system that is password protected, Year 2000 compliant and about the size of a notebook to save valuable office space. It's also scaleable; so when office needs grow, the AccuTrac(tm) SA System can be upgraded to function as a data station in a full-fledged, networked AccuTrac(tm) PC Mail Accounting System.

Pitney Bowes is a \$3.9 billion provider of informed mail and messaging management. For more information about the company, please visit our web site at: <http://www.pitney-bowes.com>. SEQN: BW1481

Indexing (document details)

Author(s): Business/Technology Editors

Dateline: CONNECTICUT

Publication title: Business Wire. New York: Feb 10, 1998. pg. 1

Source type: Wire Feed

ProQuest document ID: 26145224

Text Word Count 738

Document URL: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=26145224&sid=4&Fmt=3&clie>

ntId=19649&RQT=309&VName=PQD

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Databases selected: Multiple databases...

The business of mail

Adkins, Tony. *Office Systems*. Mt. Airy: Dec 1993. Vol. 10, Iss. 12; pg. 51, 2 pgs

Abstract (Summary)

Despite the recessionary times, US mail volume has experienced a steady growth in recent years, largely because of increases in areas such as direct mail and end-user billing. Consequently, the mailroom has emerged as an important cost center within a business, and mailing or shipping are now viewed as significant elements of overhead. As a result, today's sophisticated yet cost-effective mail- and shipping-equipment solutions are designed to increase productivity for all levels of users. The most significant change in mailing-equipment technology over the past 5 years is the automatic resetting of postage meters. Another industry-wide movement is the growing popularity of more sophisticated mail accounting systems. In addition, tabletop folder/inserters systems that address every level of customer need are now available. However, although purchasing a mailing or shipping system may sound like a good deal, the costs of add-ons and maintenance may make leasing a more cost-effective solution for many companies.

Full Text (970 words)

Copyright Office Systems Magazine Corporation Dec 1993

More than 550 million pieces of mail pass through the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS's) system every day, 94% of it generated by corporate America. Despite the recessionary times, mail volume has experienced a steady growth nationwide in recent years--largely because of increases in areas such as direct mail and end-user billing. Even with the emergence of different communications technologies--including E-mail and the facsimile machine--there will continue to be an important communication role for mail in the business world.

With steadily increasing mail volume, the mailroom has emerged as an important cost center within businesses, regardless of their size or the industries they serve. Mailing and shipping are now viewed as significant elements of overhead, an issue that's uppermost in the minds of businesspeople today.

New mailing-and shipping-equipment technologies, designed to increase productivity and provide greater cost-effectiveness, have received a warm reception industrywide. Ongoing changes in rates and rate structures, within the USPS, and increased competition among parcel carriers such as UPS, RPS, Federal Express, Airborne and DHL have motivated companies to keep an even closer eye on mailroom management.

With new cost benefits and dramatically improved mailroom technologies, the profile of the mailing-equipment user has changed dramatically over the past decade. It's no longer a select list of companies from the Fortune 500; the list now includes small to midsize businesses, even companies that mail less than 100 pieces a day. Today's sophisticated, yet cost-effective, mailing-and shipping-equipment solutions are designed to increase productivity for all levels of users.

WHAT'S NEW IN MAIL?

A more systems-oriented approach to mailing equipment is now available to the user. People aren't just buying a mailing machine. They're buying, for example, a mailing machine interfaced with a scale that automatically sets the postage value as the mail is weighed. Buyers are also choosing specific cost-saving equipment features. They're selecting postage meters that can handle decimals so they can take advantage of more-economical USPS rates. Another popular feature is a system's ability to "rate shop," to determine the most cost-effective choice from the many possibilities now available.

The most significant change in mailing-equipment technology over the past 5 years is the automatic resetting of postage meters. In the past, customers had to take their meters to the post office and stand in line to add additional postage. Today, thanks to the cooperation of the USPS, telephone meter resetting is the current standard, which saves the customer that costly and time-consuming trip to the post office.

Another industry-wide movement is the growing popularity of more-sophisticated mail accounting systems. Now more than ever, companies want to be in control of their costs. And, for many businesses, a quick and efficient method to charge back mailing costs to their customers is essential. Mail accounting systems provide consolidated reports outlining the customer's mailing and shipping transactions.

FOLDER/INSERTERS: OUTSOURCING VS. IN-HOUSE

Document handling is a huge growth area. Tabletop folder/inserters systems that address every level of customer need are now available. There's an increasing number of companies that regularly send out mailings of 200, 300 or 500 pieces, quantities that are insignificant to a direct-mail house. Yet such mailings are cumbersome and costly to process manually in-house. These companies represent the largest growth area in the folder/ inserter user market.

If a company processes more than 100 documents a day, it would probably benefit by--and save money with--the use of a folder/inserters. Especially with billing, companies can save money and increase productivity by bringing the function in-house.

Customers have also moved toward a systems approach. Businesses don't want a machine that just folds and inserts. They want an intelligent system. One that cross-folds and handles different types and sizes of paper. One that can fold and insert documents, and seal the envelope in one pass. One that can interface with a mailing machine. And one that's modular--allowing flexibility to accommodate the company's changing documenthandling requirements.

LEASE VS. PURCHASE: WHICH MAKES MORE SENSE?

Purchasing a mailing or shipping system may sound like a good deal up front. You shop around and find you can save a few hundred here and there. The fact is, a company can negotiate a purchase price without realizing that the initial purchase is only about 40% of the total cost. The company will also be charged for maintenance, parts, add-ons, system upgrades or other features and services, none of which are fixed costs.

What can companies do about it? For many, leasing-price protection is a solution. Leasing not only locks in a price for a period of time, such as 5 years, but you can also bundle in the cost of maintenance, parts, system upgrades, etc.--all within one equipment and maintenance agreement. At the very least, you'll know down to the penny what the costs will be.

WHAT'S TO COME

We don't see any dramatic technological breakthroughs in the next several years. Rather, we're at an evolutionary stage within the industry. Equipment manufacturers are incorporating new technologies into equipment features designed to address the changing needs of their customers.

Since Marvin Runyon has taken over leadership of the USPS, emphasis has been placed on customer service. The postal service is working on incorporating simpler rate structures to allow customers to take greater advantage of discounts. For postal discounts to be motivational, they've got to be understood.

As a mailing-and/or shipping-equipment user, or a potential user, first a company should prepare for future mailing and shipping requirements and keep an open mind about vendors. There are many opportunities to lower costs and be more efficient. Subscribe to industry magazines and attend trade shows. There's no doubt that you'll find a wealth of ideas, and your investment in time will be well spent, with tangible benefits in the form of better control over mailing and shipping costs.

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Indexing (document details)

Subjects: Technological change, Postal & delivery services, Mailrooms, Industrywide conditions, Cost control, Automation

Classification Codes 9190, 8350, 5110

Locations: US
Author(s): Adkins, Tony
Publication title: Office Systems. Mt. Airy: Dec 1993. Vol. 10, Iss. 12; pg. 51, 2 pgs
Source type: Periodical
ISSN: 87503441
ProQuest document ID: 1256765
Text Word Count 970
Document URL: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1256765&sid=5&Fmt=3&clientid=19649&RQT=309&VName=PQD>

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